

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION AF-04

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6057

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 6109

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID, EINV, MASS, PBOR, PDIP, PINS, PINT, SHUM, ET,
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SUBJECT: U.S.-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS

1. WHILE ANYTHING LIKE A DEFINITIVE OUTLINE OF FUTURE US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS IS NOT IN CARDS AT PRESENT TIME AND WILL CERTAINLY BE MOLDED BY COURSE OF EVENTS, IT IS POSSIBLE ON EVE OF MY DEPARTURE TO SEE SOMEWHAT MORE CLEARLY DOWN THE ROAD THAN WAS CASE SEVERAL MONTHS AGO. I BELIEVE IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE TO RECORD SOME OBSERVATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS RE DIRECTION THESE RELATIONS MIGHT TAKE AND THIS MESSAGE ATTEMPTS TO DO THAT.

2. FOR ETHIOPIA ITSELF, EVEN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE IS AT BEST MURKY. THERE ARE UNRESOLVED MAJOR PROBLEMS IN ERITREA, THE OGADEN AND THE SOUTH. DISSIDENT GROUPS, I.E., EPRP, EDU AND PERHAPS NOW ME'I SONE, CONTINUE TO CHALLENGE THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. URBAN TERROR IS STILL WITH US. THE DIRG IS NOT POPULAR CERTAINLY AMONG MORE EDUCATED GROUPS. SUPPORT AMONG "BROAD MASSES" (PEASANTS, WORKERS, KEBELES, ARMY) IS STILL AN ENIGMA. VERY RECENTLY THERE ARE SIGNS OF SOME UNREST IN ADDIS PRESUMABLY AMONG LESS WELL-EDUCATED GROUPS. NONETHELESS,

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THE REVOLUTION ROLLS ON, ALTHOUGH IN MY JUDGMENT IT STILL HAS LONG WAY TO GO AND ITS ULTIMATE SHAPE IS BY NO MEANS CERTAIN, AND THE DIRG KEEPS WEATHERING ONE CRISIS AFTER ANOTHER. IMPORTANT KEY TO POWER STILL REMAINS MILITARY, PERHAPS NOW AUGMENTED BY MILITIA, BUT THUS FAR DESPITE OCCASIONAL GRUMBINGS, MILITARY HAS SHOWN NO INCLINATION TO TURN ON DIRG. WHETHER THIS WILL REMAIN CASE SHOULD THERE BE SERIOUS BATTLE-

FIELD LOSSES REMAINS BE SEEN. YET DESPITE PLETHORA OF PROBLEMS, I DO NOT BELIEVE ANYONE SHOULD DISMISS LIGHTLY STAYING POWER OF DIRG AND OF MENGISTU HIMSELF, AND I CONTINUE BELIEVE DIRG (AND MENGISTU IF NOT ELIMINATED BY ASSASSIN'S BULLET) MAY BE WITH US FOR SOME TIME TO COME.

3. MEANWHILE ATMOSPHERE IN ADDIS TOWARD WEST IN GENERAL AND US IN PARTICULAR HAS UNDERGONE PERCEPTIBLE CHANGE OVER PAST TEN WEEKS. IT SILL NOT CLEAR TO ME WHETHER THIS IS PERMANENT OR TEMPORARY CHANGE, BUT THE LONGER IT LASTS, THE MORE ETHIOPIANS SEEM TO BE SAYING THAT THEY DO INDEED WISH TO FOLLOW MORE NON-ALIGNED COURSE EXTERNALLY AND THAT HAVING FRIENDS OR AT LEAST NOT ENEMIES IS BETTER, ESPECIALLY NOW WITH OGADEN IN FLAMES. CHANGED ATMOSPHERE HAS OF COURSE MADE LIFE EASIER FOR US HERE AND INTER ALIA HAS OPENED DOORS THAT HAVE BEEN CLOSED. IT ALSO SUGGESTS EPMG IN SPIRIT OF NON-ALIGNMENT WILL BE MORE INTERESTED IN HEARING VIEWPOINTS OF COUNTRIES OTHER THAN COMMUNISTS. THIS TOO COULD CHANGE SHOULD ETHIOPIA EMERGE VICTORIOUS USING COMMUNIST WEAPONS IN OGADEN, AND COME TO SOME SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENT IN ERITREA. SOVIET INFLUENCE WOULD BE HIGH, AND EITHER UNDER PRESSURE OR OUT OF SENSE OF GRATITUDE, EPMG COULD REVERT TO PROPAGANDISTIC TONE OF LAST SPRING. NONETHELESS, I THINK CHANCES ARE AGAINST SUCH A DEVELOPMENT UNLESS RADICAL WING OF DIRG, WHICH PRESENTLY IN DECLINE, NONETHELESS SUCCEEDS IN GAINING POSITION OF PREDOMINANCE AGAIN IN DIRG. WE KNOW THAT EPMG HAS RECEIVED COUNSEL FROM
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FRINEDS SUCH AS YUGOSLAVIA, WHOSE OPINIONS THEY VALUE, TO REPAIR RELATIONS WITH WEST, AND SOVIETS THEMSELVES HAVE TOLD US OF NEED FOR ETHIOPIA TO CULTIVATE GOOD RELATIONS WITH ALL COUNTRIES.

4. IN MEANTIME, WE OURSELVES HAVE EMERGED FROM PAST FEW MONTHS IN SOMEWHAT BETTER POSITION THAN DARK DAYS OF APRIL-JUNE PRE-SAGED WOULD LIKELY BE CASE. EPMG HAS TOLD US OF THEIR DESIRE TO MAINTAIN NORMAL RELATIONS AND WHERE POSSIBLE TO IMPROVE THEM. THEY HAVE INDICATED A WISH TO CONTINUE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND BACKED IT UP WITH SPECIFIC REQUESTS. THE US HAS CEASED TO BE PUBLIC WHIPPING BOY AND WE HAVE HAD MORE ACCESS TO TOP LEADERSHIP IN FOUR MONTHS THAN WAS CASE FOR OVER YEAR PREVIOUSLY. WESTERN JOURNALISTS, INCLUDING AMERICAN, HAVE BEEN PERMITTED ENTRY. THERE HAVE BEEN FEWER CASES OF HARASSMENT OF MISSIONAIRIES (GRANTED THERE ARE FEWER NOW TO HARASS) AND EPMG HAS BEEN GENERALLY COOPERATIVE IN RESOLVING INDIVIDUAL CASES INVOLVING AMERICANS. MOREOVER, EPMG IS NOW SENDING AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON FOR FIRST TIME IN ALMOST THREE YEARS.

5. AS CONSEQUENCE, IT NOW POSSIBLE TO PERCEIVE, HOWEVER VAGUELY, OUTLINES OF WHAT OUR RELATIONSHIP MAY BE. BOTH SIDES HAVE

INDICATED DESIRE TO NORMALIZE AND IMPROVE RELATIONS. BOTH OF US WANT AN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO CONTINUE. I BELIEVE WE SHOULD NOW START TO BUILD ON THIS RELATIONSHIP, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF EPMG'S NEW DEDICATION TO NON-ALIGNMENT AND KEEPING IN MIND THERE IS STILL CONSIDERABLE RESERVOIR OF GOOD

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CORRECTED COPY (PARA 6 LINE 14)

WILL FOR AMERICANS IN THIS COUNTRY. WE SHOULD BE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS THAT WE SHALL HAVE MUCH INFLUENCE HERE (EVEN WITH MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WE HAD PRECIOUS LITTLE AFTER REVOLUTION BEGAN). SOVIETS AND OTHER SURROGATES WILL BE DIFFICULT TO CHALLENGE FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE. YET SOVIET POSITION IS BY NO MEANS IMPREGNABLE. THEIR ATTEMPTS TO RIDE ETHIOPIAN AND SOMALIAN HORSES HAVE ANY NUMBER OF POTENTIAL PITFALLS, AND IF SOVIETS STUMBLE OR MISCALCULATE, QUIET AMERICAN PRESENCE, IN ADDITION TO SERVING AS COUNTERWEIGHT IN NON-ALIGNED TERMS, MAY TURN OUT TO HAVE DIVIDENDS THAT ARE NOT PREDICTABLE NOW.

6. ACCORDINGLY, I RECOMMEND THAT WE FOLLOW A STEADY, RATHER LOW-KEY, COURSE USING PATIENT, QUIET, YET CANDID DIPLOMACY TO GET OUR POINTS OF VIEW ACROSS. WE SHOULD BE RESPONSIVE WHERE WE CAN TO REQUESTS FOR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND PREPARED TO FOLLOW THEM THROUGH IN WASHINGTON. WE SHOULD THINK IN TERMS OF SENDING AN AMBASSADOR HERE IN NEAR FUTURE AS CONCRETE EVIDENCE OF OUR DESIRE TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS. WE SHOULD NOT HESITATE TO REQUEST FLIGHT CLEARANCES AND PORT CALLS WHERE SECURITY PERMITS AS PART OF NORMAL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.

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WE SHOULD SEEK OPPORTUNITIES TO RESTORE THE EMBASSY TO A MORE NORMAL CONFIGURATION SUCH AS QUIETLY PRESSING FOR A RETURN OF A USIS PRESENCE (BUT NOT YET DAO, WHICH I DO NOT BELIEVE THEY ANYTHING LIKE READY FOR). WE SHOULD CONTINUE BE EVEN-HANDED IN OUR ATTITUDES TOWARD OGADEN PROBLEM AND IN ETHIOPIA'S RELATIONS WITH SUDAN, NOT GIVING ETHIOPIANS REASON TO BELIEVE WE ARE TAKING SIDES ON ISSUES THAT ARE OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO THEM, INCLUDING AVOIDANCE OF GIVING IMPRESSION THAT ETHIOPIA IS PAWN IN MUCH BIGGER QUESTION (TO US) OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH SOVIETS. WE SHOULD CONTINUE VIGOROUSLY TO SUPPORT AFRICAN INITIATIVES TOWARD RESOLVING HORN PROBLEMS, TO INCLUDE ADDITIONAL PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR PRINCIPLE OF TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO REJECT ANY POSSIBILITY OF RESUMING A MILITARY RELATIONSHIP BUT MAKE KNOWN IN BOTH WORD AND DEED OUR WILLINGNESS TO BE HELPFUL IN OTHER AREAS. FINALLY WE SHOULD STAY IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH OUR WESTERN ALLIES AND ARAB FRIENDS ON HORN MATTERS.

7. THE ROAD WILL NOT BE ALL THAT SMOOTH. WE ARE LIKELY TO HAVE CONTINUING PROBLEMS WITH HUMAN RIGHTS. YET I CONTINUE BELIEVE WE MUST TRY MAINTAIN BALANCED APPROACH ON THIS SUBJECT, MAKING CLEAR OUR CONCERNS WHEN THAT WILL SERVE USEFUL PURPOSE (BUT NOT AT EVERY TURN IN ROAD), YET AT SAME TIME GIVING RECOGNITION AND INDICATION OF OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR REVOLUTION AND WHAT IT IS THEY ARE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH IN HUMAN RIGHTS TERMS AS SEEN BY THEM. WE ALSO HAVE UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF COMPENSATION FOR NATIONALIZED FIRMS. WHILE THIS ISSUE HAS DRAGGED ON FOR ALMOST THREE YEARS, I CONTINUE BELIEVE THAT EPMG'S INTENTIONS ARE GOOD, THAT WE SHOULD CONTINUE HAVE PATIENCE AND THAT WE REFRAIN FROM INSISTING ON LETTER OF LAW FOR PRESENT. ETHIOPIA HAS MAJOR PROBLEMS OF WHICH COMPENSATION IS NOT ONE, AS WELL AS MAJOR CLAIMS ON ITS RESOURCES. ACCORDINGLY, WHILE I BELIEVE BOTH DEPT AND EMBASSY SHOULD

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KEEP UP PRESSURE ON EPMG TO RESOLVE PROBLEM, I ALSO BELIEVE WE MUST GIVE RECOGNITION TO FACT THAT ETHIOPIA HAS OTHER PRESSING PRIORITIES AND THAT IN CIRCUMSTANCES, DESPITE GOOD WILL, QUESTION OF COMPENSATION MAY NOT RANK AS HIGH IN THEIR EYES AS IT DOES IN OURS.

8. IN SUM, THROUGH COMBINATION OF CIRCUMSTANCES, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT STATE OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS HAS EVOLVED SUFFICIENTLY OVER PAST THREE MONTHS TO PERMIT US TO THINK IN

TERMS OF STRONGER, EVEN CLOSER, TIES THAN WE MIGHT HAVE THOUGHT POSSIBLE FOUR OR FIVE MONTHS AGO. OUR INFLUENCE WILL NOT BE STRONG, BUT WE SHOULD BE READY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ANY SLIPS THE SOVIETS AND THEIR FRIENDS MAY MAKE, AND IN ECONOMIC FIELD, TOGETHER WITH OUR WESTERN ALLIES BE PREPARED TO FILL IN GAPS SOVIETS CANNOT HANDLE. NEITHER THE EMBASSY NOR THE DEPT SHOULD THINK IN TERMS OF BOLD NEW INITIATIVES YET, BUT BOTH SHOULD BE ALERT TO EXPLOITING REALISTIC POSSIBILITIES AS THEY MAY OCCUR, PARTICULARLY IN FIELD OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE SINCE THIS IS MOST LIKELY TO BE CORE OF OUR FUTURE RELATIONSHIP. WASHINGTON, FOR ITS PART, WILL NEED TO GUARD AGAINST REGRETTABLE SITUATION THAT DEVELOPED IN SEPT RE FY 77 ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IF WE ARE TO MAINTAIN ANY CREDIBILITY THAT WE MEAN WHAT WE SAY ABOUT IMPROVED RELATIONS AND ABOUT OUR DESIRE HELP POOREST ELEMENTS OF ETHIOPIAN SOCIETY. IN GENERAL, I CAN FORESEE A PERIOD OF TIME WHEN MORE THAN THE USUAL AMOUNT OF PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING WILL BE NECESSARY ON OUR PART AS NOT ONLY WE OURSELVES BUT ALSO ETHIOPIANS ADJUST TO NEW RELATIONSHIP JUST WHEN THEY ARE BEING HARASSED AND PRE-OCCUPIED ON ALL SIDES BY MATTERS WHICH ARE LITERALLY VITAL TO THEM, AND WHEN THERE WILL CONTINUE TO BE TEMPTATIONS TO BACKSLIDE AND AGAIN BLAME OTHER COUNTRIES SPECIFICALLY FOR THEIR OWN PROBLEMS.

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